

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING

February 9, 2010

First Floor, Town Hall

Minutes

Members Present: Wm Levine, Jaime Tidlund, Ruth Hazzard, Pat Wagner, Sally Fitz
Non-Members Present: David Ziomek (Staff Liaison)

Minutes:

January minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved with changes.

Farmer Breakfast:

The invitation was reviewed some changes were made, Ruth is going to make changes and submit the invitation to Libby to circulate to Amherst Farms, Pat will be listed as the contact if anyone should have questions. Wm to contact the Amherst Bulletin.

The Ag Com will have index cards and pens so people can write questions, comments and suggestions for the Ag Com.

The farmer database printout was reviewed some additional names were added to the list, and given to Dave for Libby to update, further additions and corrections will be made in the up coming months.

Work Plan:

David thought it would be useful for the Ag Com to get together a work plan, so that we will have an idea as to where we want to be going as an Ag Com, and what important issues we should focus on.

Annual Report to the Select Board:

An annual report is due for the period 7/1/08-6/30/09. The Ag Com talked about some points we would like highlighted in the report to show what it is we have been doing such as: Participation in the 250th festivities, planning the farm festival and getting the right to farm bylaw in place. We also welcomed Touria, Wm, Pauline and Sally to the commission, and also the March Farm Forum, growing food in Amherst meetings. We facilitated dialogue between the BOH and the farmers market. The Ag Com also submitted opinions on the following topics: The Bergstrom property, the Re-Design of Spring St. As well as the Andrews/LaVerdiere property.

Some thoughts about the 2009-2010 report were also documented, the Ag com co-sponsored the North Amherst Fire Pit Chat, a farmer mailing list was compiled, and the farm festival took place.

Meadow Street

A meeting was held with Larry Shaffer about the Meadow Street Project. Larry Shaffer made it very clear that he would like to see some sort of economic development in this area. He also made it clear that any venture at this property that would have a negative impact on J&J farm the town would have no involvement in. J&J farm said it would be a positive move to have some sort of farmers market or stand there that they would be involved in, this could also be a joint effort with some Hadley Farms also. The Town Manager also stated that he does not see this as a pivotal place that the town would have any interest in preserving for its natural resources.

The Planning Board has closed the hearing on this parcel and gave the go ahead for the climate controlled storage facility. The owners have already talked about going ahead with the clearing of the land and getting it ready to either be built on or sold to someone who wants to build on it. The Ag Com thought that possibly Dan Kaplan could offer some advice on different Agricultural options could realistically take place here. Ruth and Pat to meet with J&J family again on February 12.

Local Farmer Meeting

Friday, March 12th at 1:00 at the USDA office on West Street in Amherst there will be a meeting to discuss season extension. We would like to get an idea of how many farmers would benefit from a year round market.

Tenure and Use for Farming on Town Owned Land

The Ag Com would like to get a survey of town owned land so we know how the land is broke down and what parcels are leased.

Some discussions with farmers who lease and the Town would involve the length of leases (to encourage good land stewardship), permitting animal agriculture, the possibility of putting up temporary structures (high tunnels), to aid them in growing, as well as temporary farm stands so they can sell their goods at the place they are grown.

David Ziomek will prepare a presentation for the March meeting showing us how the land is broken down. Mr. Ziomek also mentioned that he will bring up the issue of leases with the chair of the Conservation Commission on February 11, 2010.

The April meeting is going to be used mainly to develop the Ag Com Work Plan.

The Meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jaime Tidlund